Boarding School Abuses, Human Rights, and Reparations

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During the 19th century and into the 20th century, American Indian children were forcibly abducted from their homes to attend Christian and U.S. government-run boarding schools as a matter of state policy. This system had its beginnings in the 1600s, when John Eliot erected "praying towns" for American Indians, in which he separated them out from their communities to receive Christian "civilizing" instruction. However, colonists soon concluded that such practices should be targeted toward children because they believed adults were too set in their ways to become Christianized. Jesuit priests began to develop schools for Indian children along the St. Lawrence River in the 1600s.

However, the boarding school system became more formalized under President Ulysses S. Grant's Peace Policy of 1869 to 1870. The goal of the policy was to turn over the administration of Indian reservations to Christian denominations. Congress set aside funds to erect school facilities to be run by churches and missionary societies (Noriega, 1992: 380). These facilities were a combination of day and boarding schools erected on Indian reservations.

Then, in 1879, Richard Pratt founded the first off-reservation boarding school, Carlisle. He argued that as long as boarding schools were primarily situated on reservations, it was too easy for children to run away from school and efforts to assimilate Indian children into boarding schools would be reversed when children returned home to their families during the summer. He proposed a policy whereby children would be taken far from their homes at an early age, only to return when they were young adults. By 1909, 25 off-reservation boarding schools, 157 on-reservation boarding schools, and 307 day schools were in operation (Adams, 1995: 57–58). The stated rationale of the policy was to "Kill the Indian and save the Man." Over 100,000 Native children were forced into attending these schools.

Interestingly, Richard Pratt was actually one of the "friends of the Indians." That is, U.S. colonists, in their attempt to end Native control over their land bases, generally came up with two policies to address the "Indian problem." Some sectors advocated outright physical extermination of Native peoples. Mean-

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while, the "friends" of the Indians, such as Pratt, advocated cultural rather than physical genocide. Carl Schurz, at that time a former Commissioner of Indian Affairs, concluded that Native peoples had "this stern alternative: extermination or civilization" (*Ibid.*: 15), Henry Pancoast, a Philadelphia lawyer, advocated a similar policy in 1882: "We must either butcher them or civilize them, and what we do we must do quickly" (*Ibid.*: 2).

Thus, when Pratt founded off-reservation boarding schools, his rationale was "Kill the Indian in order to save the Man." "Transfer the savage-born infant to the surroundings of civilization, and he will grow to possess a civilized language and habit," said Pratt (1973). He modeled Carlisle on a school he developed in Ft. Marion prison, which held 72 Native prisoners of war. Separate children from their parents, inculcate Christianity and white cultural values into them, and encourage or force them to assimilate into the dominant society. Of course, because of the racism in the U.S, Native peoples could never really assimilate into the dominant society. Hence, the consequence of this policy was to assimilate them into the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder of the larger society. For the most part, schools primarily prepared Native boys for manual labor or farming and Native girls for domestic work. Children were also involuntarily leased out to white homes as menial labor during the summers rather than sent back to their homes. To transform them into middle-class housewives, Indian girls learned such useful skills such as ironing, sewing, washing, serving raw oysters at cocktail parties, and making attractive flower arrangements (Trennart, 1982: 54). As K. Tsianina Lomawaima points out, very few Native women were ever in a position to use these skills or become housewives. She states:

> An economic rationale of placing Indian women in domestic employment does not account for the centrality of domesticity training in their education. An ideological rationale more fully accounts for domesticity training: it was training in dispossession under the guise of domesticity, developing a habitus shaped by the messages of subservience and one's proper place (Lomawaima, 1994: 86).

Thus, the primary role of this education for Indian girls was to inculcate patriarchal norms and desires into Native communities, so that women would lose their places of leadership in Native communities.

The rationale for choosing cultural rather than physical genocide was often economic. Carl Schurz concluded that it would cost a million dollars to kill an Indian in warfare, whereas it cost only $1,200 to school an Indian child for eight years. Secretary of the Interior Henry Teller argued that it would cost $22 million to wage war against Indians over a 10-year period, but would cost less than one-quarter of that amount to educate 30,000 children for a year (Pratt, 1973). Consequently, administrators of these schools ran them as inexpensively as possible. Children were given inadequate food and medical care, and were overcrowded in

these schools. As a result, children routinely died in mass numbers of starvation and disease. In addition, children were often forced to do grueling work in order to raise monies for the schools and salaries for the teachers and administrators.

Attendance at these boarding schools was mandatory, and children were forcibly taken from their homes for the majority of the year. They were forced to worship as Christians and speak English (native traditions and languages were prohibited) (Binder and Reimers, 1982: 59). Sexual, physical, and emotional violence was rampant. Even when teachers were charged with abuse, boarding schools refused to investigate. In the case of just one teacher, John Boone at the Hopi school, FBI investigations in 1987 found that he had sexually abused over 142 boys, but the principal of that school had not investigated any allegations of abuse (*American Eagle*, 1994).[1] Despite the epidemic of sexual abuse in boarding schools, the Bureau of Indian Affairs did not issue a policy on reporting sexual abuse until 1987, and did not issue a policy to strengthen the background checks of potential teachers until 1989 (*Ojibwe News*, 1990). Though not all Native peoples see their boarding school experiences as negative, it is generally the case that much, if not most, of the current dysfunctionality in Native communities can be traced to the boarding school era.

This system was later imported to Canada in the form of the residential school system. Recently, the Truth Commission on Genocide in Canada issued a report that claims the involvement of mainline churches and the federal government in the murder of over 50,000 Native children through the Canadian residential school system. The list of offenses committed by church officials includes murder by beating, poisoning, hanging, starvation, strangulation, and medical experimentation. Torture was used to punish children for speaking Aboriginal languages. Children were involuntarily sterilized. In addition, the report found that church clergy, police, and business and government officials were involved in maintaining pedophile rings that used children from residential schools (Truth Commission into Genocide in Canada, 2001: 29). Charges were also raised that the grounds of several schools contained unmarked graveyards of children who were murdered, particularly those born due to the rape of Native girls by priests and other church officials at the school (Fournier, 1996). The Canadian government and certain churches in Canada have taken minimal steps toward addressing their involvement in this genocidal policy, but this has not been the case in the U.S, because there is not the same level of documentation of abuses.

Today, most of the schools are closed, but a few remain. Although the same level of abuse has not continued, charges of physical and sexual abuses in currently operating schools still arise.

Boarding Schools and Human Rights

These boarding school policies clearly violate a number of human rights legal standards, including:

1. The International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
2. The Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples;
3. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
4. The Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; and
5. The Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Both the U.S. government and churches have committed boarding school abuses with impunity. This policy stands in clear contrast to Canada, where the Canadian government has held both itself and Canadian churches liable and responsible for residential school abuses. In the U.S., by contrast, churches continue to deny any culpability. For instance, when noted Native journalist, Tim Giago of Rosebud, South Dakota, wrote a book of poetry that addressed his nine-year history of abuse in Red Cloud Indian School, the priests expunged his records from the school and denied that he had attended the institution for more than six months. They completely expunged the records of another student who had been there for 12 years, denying that he had ever attended that institution (Giago, 1994).

Human rights violations can only be filed with the United Nations for events that take place after a treaty has entered into force. *However*, the exception to this rule would be if the event has continuing effects after the date of entry into force (Amnesty International, 2001). In the case of boarding schools, it is clear that Native communities suffer devastating, continuing effects as result of these policies.

Consequently, the U.S. should be required to make reparations by addressing the continuing effects of human rights violations perpetrated by boarding school policies. Some of these continuing effects include:

- Increased physical, sexual, and emotional violence in Native communities;
- Unemployment and under-employment in Native communities;
- Increased suicide rates;
- Increased substance abuse;
- Loss of language and loss of religious/cultural traditions;
- Increased depression and post-traumatic stress disorder; and
- Increased child abuse.

Though not all Native people viewed their boarding school experiences as negative, it appears to be the case that, after the onset of boarding schools in Native communities, abuse became endemic within Indian families. For instance, Randy Fred (Tseshaht), a former boarding school student, says that children in his school began to mimic the abuse they were experiencing (Haig-Brown, 1988: 14–15). After Father Harold McIntee from St. Joseph's residential school on the

Alkali Lake reserve was convicted of sexual abuse in 1989, two of his victims were later convicted of sexual abuse charges. In Canada, continuing effects from residential schools have been documented, including physical and sexual violence perpetrated by survivors, underemployment or unemployment, depression, suicide, substance abuse, loss of language, and loss of cultural and spiritual traditions. Similar continuing effects are currently in the process of being documented in the United States. Meanwhile, the U.S. has not instituted any policies that could address these affects, such as language and cultural revitalization programs, counseling and other healing services, or culturally sensitive economic development programs.

Recently, the Boarding School Healing Project developed in the U.S. with the intent of building a movement to demand reparations for boarding school abuses. Such a project has important implications for addressing sexual violence and for reparation struggles as a whole. Before exploring these implications, it is important to outline some of the tensions that emerged between indigenous peoples and African descendent groups over the issue of reparations as the context for this project.

Reparations

> "You can have the mule, but the forty acres are ours." — Pamela Kingfisher (Cherokee), in a dialogue between indigenous and African descendants over the issues of reparations at the U.N. Conference Against Racism

Pamela Kingfisher's comment encapsulates the tension between indigenous peoples and peoples of African descent over the issues of reparations. Although a wide variety of demands has been articulated under the banner of "reparations," the common demand that African Americans and other peoples of color be given land by the U.S. government is generally opposed by indigenous peoples, who argue that the U.S. government has no land to give anyone. At the NGO Preparatory meeting for last year's United Nations Conference on Racism in Quito, Ecuador, both Roma (also known as "Gypsies") and African-descendant groups called for "self-determination over their ancestral land bases in the Americas." Of course, indigenous peoples took issue with this demand as it implicitly denied indigenous title to these same land bases. Native activist Sherry Wilson describes similar tensions between Native activist organizations and the Republic of New Afrika, which calls for land title in the U.S. to be transferred to New Afrikans. Her comments were provoked by her reaction to a representative of the Republic of New Afrika, who stood up at a preparatory meeting for the WCAR that took place in Atlanta, Georgia (November 2000) and said: "Welcome to the Republic of New Afrika." That was a shock to the Cherokee peoples attending the conference, who see Georgia as their ancestral land, despite the policies of relocation that displaced many Cherokee to Oklahoma in the 1800s. States Wilson:

> I don't think any other people of color would object to reparations to those who were victims of slavery. I certainly would support that. I just don't think it's going to be somebody else's land, though. That's like participating in the oppression of another person (personal interview).

Despite these tensions, given the massive land thefts that have taken place against indigenous nations, it would seem that Native peoples would be demanding reparations of their own. However, the prevalent demand in many sectors of the reparations movement for financial compensation on either the individual or collective level can present a barrier to the participation of indigenous peoples in this movement. To see why this issue would be of concern, it is important to focus on the particular nature of land-based struggles of Native peoples in the U.S. During the 1950s, the U.S. government pursued the policy of "termination" against Native nations. This was designed to terminate the tribal status of Native peoples and hence end their collective control over their lands. One component of this policy was the strategy of financial compensation for outstanding land claims. In 1946, the U.S. formed the Indian Claims Commission, which was designed to adjudicate land claims. In its award, the Claims Commission could deduct the monies the U.S. government spent on funding the military to massacre that tribe or kidnap its children and put them into boarding school. The most significant problem with the Claims Commission, however, is that compensation could only take the form of financial compensation; lost lands could not be restored to indigenous control. Tribes often found that simply by the act of bringing their claims to the Commission, they had given up land title in the eyes of the U.S. government. Thus, the basic premise of the Claims Commission was to settle all land claims by providing financial compensation to free the U.S. government from ongoing treaty obligations between it and Native nations, further consolidating Native lands under U.S. government control (Churchill, 1993).

This explains why Native peoples are reluctant to join a movement in which a common demand is financial compensation on an individual basis. At the heart of the issue, no matter how much financial compensation the U.S. may give, such compensation does not ultimately end the colonial relationship between the United States and indigenous nations. The struggle for native sovereignty is essentially one of control over land and resources, rather than concerns over financial compensation for past and continuing wrongs.

Despite these tensions, it is critical for indigenous peoples to be part of a global movement for reparations. If we think about reparations less in monetary terms to compensate for social oppression than as a movement to transform the neocolonial economic relationships between the U.S. and people of color, indigenous peoples, and Third World countries, then we see how critical this movement could be to all of us. The articulation of reparations as a movement to cancel the Third World debt, for instance, is instructive in thinking of strategies that could fundamentally alter these relations. As the history of neocolonialism in Africa,

Asia, and Latin America shows us, we cannot achieve political sovereignty without economic sovereignty. Moreover, a primary reason why demands for sovereignty by indigenous nations often fall short of calling for political independence from the U.S. is because indigenous peoples know that without a solid economic infrastructure, which the U.S. government has systematically destroyed for most tribes (stereotypes about Indian gaming notwithstanding), political independence in and of itself could contribute to further economic devastation. Thus, a successful struggle for sovereignty must incorporate a struggle for reparations.

At the time of this writing, a class action suit, *Zephier* v. *United States*, Civil Action No. 03–768 L, had been filed against the U.S. government. This case is largely based on violations of the "bad man clause" contained in certain treaties with U.S. tribes. This clause holds that if a "man" acting on behalf of the U.S. government harms Native peoples, and the injured parties complain to the U.S. with no redress, then they are entitled to redress. Plaintiffs would assert breach of treaty claims on behalf of members of all nations who have entered treaties with the United States government containing "bad man clauses," as well as a breach of fiduciary duty claim on behalf of *all* Native individuals who have suffered physical, sexual, or psychological abuse at a federal government-mandated boarding school. Not only does this lawsuit have the potential to directly affect the legal interpretation of treaties entered into by nations that were not consulted about the litigation, but it could also directly affect the ability of tribe members to bring claims relating to boarding school abuses in the future. Even if individuals and tribes opt out of this class action, the lawsuit could set a bad precedent that would affect future claims made by nations or individuals in connection with boarding school abuses. This means that if this case loses, it could potentially prevent tribes and tribal members from bringing up future boarding school litigation. Unfortunately, a Florida law firm with no previous litigation experience in Indian law filed this case. It was filed without consulting any tribal governments or attorneys, despite its potential impact on the interpretation of treaties, and on all survivors of boarding school abuses.

The Boarding School Healing Project (BSHP) did not participate in this lawsuit because it focuses on an individual remedy and because this law firm has refused to work with or consult tribal governments. Rather, the BSHP's strategy is to pursue a collective rather than individual remedy.

The Boarding School Healing Project, a coalition of several organizations around the country, seeks to document these abuses so that Native communities can begin to heal from boarding school abuses and demand justice from the U.S. government and churches. This project has begun its work in South Dakota. Groups currently involved in the project include the South Dakota Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence, Tribal Law and Policy Institute, Indigenous Women's Network, American Indian Law Alliance, First Nations North and South, Seventh Generation Fund, Incite! Women of Color Against Violence, and

the Indian Desk of the United Church of Christ. The following four components make up the project.

Healing

The primary goal of the project is to provide healing from the historical trauma of boarding schools. Gerry Oleman of the Provincial Residential School Project reports that 22 of the first men who disclosed sexual abuse in Canadian residential schools committed suicide. Armed with this information, the BSHP concluded that a healing apparatus had to be put in place before the other components could begin so that when the issue becomes publicly discussed, survivors have a place to go for support. Thus, the project has started to develop support groups for survivors on reservations before the next components begin.

Education

To encourage people to participate in the documentation and accountability process, an education program must take place first. Consequently, before the documentation process begins, the BSHP is holding a multimedia educational event on each reservation to inform communities about the project, the documentation process, and resources for healing. In addition, the BSHP will be organizing the National Day of Remembrance every October 6 (the date the first children arrived at Carlisle Boarding School) to educate the larger public about this issue.

Documentation

The BSHP is relying on a research action model to document boarding school abuses. Researchers are recruited and trained from the community. Interviewees are interviewed in a three-part process to give people time to reflect on their boarding school experiences and the effect this experience has had on their lives. This project is systematically ensuring that participants represent all boarding schools and reservations in South Dakota. For participants who are willing, we are video-documenting the interviews so that we can compile them into educational videos for Native communities in other areas. Through this process, we have found that many survivors do not realize that what they suffered is a human rights violation. For instance, though some survivors say that they were not abused, they will often add that they saw abuse happen to other peoples. Having to witness abuse is itself a human rights violation and an injury one can claim in the U.S. courts as well. At the end of the documentation process, the BSHP holds a meeting for the interviewees to discuss the results and provide a venue for them to consider how they would like to move forward. In addition, part of the documentation process entails asking participants what types of remedies they would like to see from churches and the U.S. government, so they can be involved in the political strategy as well.

Accountability

The BSHP's accountability strategy does not rely on pursuing individual lawsuits or class action suits in which the remedies would be payments to individuals. It does attempt to provide legal advocacy and training to individuals who wish to pursue such strategies, particularly for current boarding school abuses. Its focus is to develop strategies that will empower communities as a collective and will fundamentally challenge the colonial relationships the U.S. government and churches have with Native nations.

A. The United Nations and other international fora

The BSHP sees the demand for reparations as part of an anticolonial strategy. As such, it wishes to pursue strategies that recognize the inherent sovereignty of indigenous nations. Thus, rather than seek redress primarily through the courts of the colonizer, it seems more appropriate to use bodies that adjudicate disputes between nations, such as the United Nations. Of course, part of the difficulty with such strategies is that the United States has not agreed to have U.S. violations of the treaties it has signed heard in these fora. Nevertheless, it is part of a larger political organizing strategy to challenge U.S. colonial rule over indigenous nations.

B. Churches

Native peoples from Canada have advised us that pursuing individual lawsuits against churches can lead to the loss of allies since many churches now support the sovereignty struggles of Native peoples. In addition, many Christian fundamentalist churches that actively oppose Native sovereignty are using this struggle to say that since they were not involved in boarding schools, Native peoples should join their churches. These fundamentalist churches are not allies in current sovereignty struggles, unlike some mainline denominations that were involved in boarding schools.

Consequently, the BSHP's approach to seeking reparations from churches attempts to be creative. One possibility is to negotiate with churches to proactively remedy the harms they have caused by setting up a reparations fund. Another possible remedy would be to get the Catholic Church to rescind the papal bulls that set the legal precedents in the U.S. for the doctrine of discovery that holds that Native peoples only have the right to occupy the lands, but do not have ownership over them. If successful, we would potentially undermine U.S. legal claims over our land since U.S. case law is based on these papal bulls. To date, the BSHP has succeeded in organizing the United Church of Christ and the United Methodist Church to pass resolutions in support of boarding school reparations.

C. Coalitions

To accomplish the goal of seeking reparations, relationships must be developed with the reparations movement on a global level to increase the number of allies for our movement. The BSHP has organized strong strategy sessions with people

involved in the struggle for Black reparations and the project has received much legal assistance from those involved in the current litigation strategies around reparations for slavery. In April 2004, the Boarding School Healing Project organized a joint strategy session with prominent members of African American reparations struggles to discuss possibilities for collaborative strategies. Through the United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Affairs and other international fora, the BSHP is developing links with people seeking reparations from other countries to increase international pressure on the U.S.

Boarding Schools and the Global Struggle for Reparations

The boarding school project can potentially make a meaningful contribution to the larger reparations struggle in the following ways:

(1) It would contribute to a discussion of what reparations should be. In Canada, accountability has taken the form of individual lawsuits against churches. However, pursuing this strategy individualizes struggle and the relatively small compensation per individual does not do justice to the oppression Native peoples have suffered. In the U.S., we are concluding that what we ask for is critical. Perhaps we should demand land rather than financial compensation. Perhaps reparations could include canceling the Third World debt. In short, which demands will fundamentally challenge the economic and political status quo?

(2) This project demonstrates the need to internationalize our struggle. Making up less than one percent of the population, Native peoples can never be under any illusion that they can win a campaign on their own. Yet, Native peoples have led some of the most significant victories against multinational corporations and governments because of the creative coalitions we have crafted (Smith, 2002). For reparations to succeed, national struggles must be simultaneously internationalized. The successes of racial justice struggles have largely been rooted in the U.S. government's desire to avoid embarrassment in the global arena (McAdam, 1982). News about our struggle against U.S. policies will not reach activists in other countries unless we get that news to them ourselves. We, who live in the belly of the beast, have the responsibility to address U.S. imperialism at its source. If we can expose U.S. policies of racism domestically to activists abroad, we give them the ammunition to embarrass the U.S. and challenge its claim to be the protector of democracy abroad. White supremacy is a global problem and requires a global response.

(3) Reparations must be framed as a human rights issue. Human rights are those rights under international law that are inalienable and not dependent on any particular government structure. To limit our struggles solely to a fight for "constitutional protections" is to forget that the U.S. Constitution states that black people are three-fifths of a person. Furthermore, to rely solely on such a framework does not question the legitimacy of a U.S. government that is fundamentally founded on the gross human rights violations of people of color.

(4) This project would contribute a feminist perspective to reparations struggles. That is, state policy in the forms of slavery and boarding schools constitutes human rights violations through the sexual violence of slave masters and boarding school officials. The continuing effect of this human rights violation has been the internalization of sexual and other forms of gender violence *within* African American and Native American communities. Thus, the challenge is to shape a demand for reparations that accounts for the continuing effects of human rights violations, such as violence *within* communities, that are nonetheless colonial legacies. This project also attempts to organize simultaneously against interpersonal gender violence *and* state violence by framing gender violence as a continuing effect of human rights violations perpetrated by state policy. It thus challenges the mainstream anti-domestic/sexual violence movement to conceptualize state-sponsored sexual violence as central to its work. As I have argued elsewhere, the mainstream antiviolence movement has relied upon the apparatus of state violence (in the form of the criminal justice system) to address domestic and sexual violence without considering how the state itself is a primary perpetrator of violence (Smith, 1999).

The issue of boarding schools forces us to see the connections between state violence and interpersonal violence. It is through boarding schools that violence in our communities was introduced. Yet we continue to perpetuate that violence through violence against women, child abuse, and homophobia. Similarly, much of the sexual violence in African American communities is the colonial legacy of slavery. To successfully decolonize, no amount of reparations will be successful if we do not address the oppressive behaviors we have internalized. Women of color have for too long been presented with the choice of prioritizing racial justice or gender justice. This dualistic analysis fails to recognize that it is precisely through sexism and gender violence that colonialism and white supremacy have been successful. The question, then, is what true reparations would look like for women of color who suffer state violence and interpersonal gender violence simultaneously.

(5) Boarding schools highlight the importance of analyzing the interrelatedness of white supremacy and Christian imperialism. Many political liberals fight for the "separation of church and state" and complain about the George W. Bush administration's support for faith-based initiatives, but the reality for Native peoples in particular has been that there has never been a separation of church and state. Grant's Peace Policy of 1869 handed administrative control of Indian reservations to church denominations. Native religious traditions were banned. Even today, Native peoples still lack constitutional protection for their spiritual practices (Smith, 1998; Weaver, 1998).

Colonists saw the cultural assimilation and missionization processes as part of the same project. From their point of view, Indians lacked the Scripture and the language that would allow them to comprehend God. Complained Jonathan

Edwards: "The Indian languages are extremely barbarous and barren, and very ill fitted for communicating things moral and divine, or even things speculative and abstract. In short, they are wholly unfit for a people possessed of civilization, knowledge, and refinement" (Edwards, 1998a: *clxxx*). Missionaries also complained that indigenous languages were unable to communicate the concepts of "Lord, Saviour, salvation, sinner, justice, condemnation, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, grace, glory, and heaven" (Edwards, 1998b: 426). It is not sufficient, therefore, simply to have Scriptures; the Scriptures must be in a suitable language, which happens to be English. In the colonial imaginary, to truly be Christian is to be white and vice versa. Thus, any struggle to dismantle white supremacy that does not make a critique of Christian imperialism central is seriously flawed.

(6) The continuing effects of boarding school abuses are ongoing because they have not been acknowledged by the larger society. As a result, silence within Native communities prevents Native peoples from seeking support and healing due to intergenerational trauma. Since boarding school policies are not acknowledged as human rights violations, Native peoples individualize the trauma they have suffered, thus contributing to increased shame and self-blame. If boarding school policies and their continuing effects were recognized as human rights violations, it might remove the shame associated with talking about these issues and thus provide an opportunity for communities to begin healing. The results of such work are already visible in Canada, but Native peoples in the U.S. have yet to benefit from it.

(7) Such a project could strengthen other reparations struggles. Many African American activists have expressed a reluctance to work in coalitions with other oppressed groups over the struggle for reparations, fearing that the specific demands of African Americans will diminish in importance. The issue at stake is whether we wish to formulate reparations as a reformist, even potentially reactionary demand, or as a radical demand for social transformation. Various platforms have been developed under the rubric of "reparations," many of which can actually serve to *strengthen* white supremacy. Demands that simply call for individual payments for human rights abuses under slavery do not fundamentally challenge the economic structures that keep people of color oppressed. This suggests that the U.S. simply needs to pay a lump sum to cover its past and ongoing injustices and then absolve itself of the responsibility to transform institutionalized structures of white supremacy.

Reparations also provide a framework for us to make a multitude of demands on the U.S. government (from health care, to public assistance, to education, etc.) from the perspective that such services are not to be taken away in times of economic crises or otherwise. Rather, they are reparations owed to communities of color for human rights violations on the part of the U.S. Furthermore, we could make demands that fundamentally challenge the global economic system.

However, to make such radical demands, we need a global reparations movement that unites all colonized peoples.

NOTE

1. Incidentally, after the allegations of abuse became public, the Bureau of Indian Affairs merely provided a counselor for the abused children, who then used his sessions with them to write a book.

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